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THE MOWAT GOVERNMENT

WHY IT SHOULD BE SUSTAINED.

A SPEECH DELIVERED BY

FRANK PEDLEY,

PRESIDENT OF THE TORONTO YOUNG MEN'S LIBERAL CLUB,

On November 20th, 1893.

[Issued by the Young Men's Liberal Club of Toronto.]

Gentlemen,—In my address delivered to you on the 23rd of October, I alluded to the coming Provincial general elections, and I expressed in general terms the reason for believing the present Government would be sustained. I made no attempt on that occasion to review in detail the record of the Mowat administration, but dwelt more particularly on the club's affairs and our work for the present session.

It appears, however, that one or two of my remarks have formed the text of the inaugural address of Mr. W. D McPherson, the newly-elected president of the Young Men's Liberal Conservative Association of this city.

In his address Mr. McPherson takes issue with my statements that prudence, forethought and economy have prevailed in every branch of the administration, and at considerable length dwells upon what he considers to be the shortcomings of the Mowat Government, and by an extraordinary course of reasoning unknown to any system of logic either ancient or modern, and based upon ill-digested, mis-stated and half-concealed facts, endeavors to persuade his hearers that the interests of the people of Ontario lie in placing in power his "revered leader," Mr. W. R. Meredith, supported by that section of the "party of progress" that finds shelter in the Local Legislature.

The charges made against the Government by Mr. McPherson are not altogether new, nor are the facts and figures entirely unknown to the reading public. A reference to the *Empire's* report of Mr. Clancy's speech on the Provincial Budget of this year will show a wonderful similarity in Mr. Clancy's and Mr. McPherson's methods of dealing with Ontario politics.

The same facts are given, the same words used, the same arrangement observed, the same mistakes made. Occasionally Mr. McPherson varies from Mr. Clancy in order to relieve the monotony, but substantially in all, and exactly in parts, one address is the reproduction of the other.

I propose, with the permission of this meeting, to state more fully the reasons which appear to justify the belief that the coming election will result in the return of the present Government. In stating these reasons I shall not pretend to originality, but shall simply follow in the footsteps of abler men who at various times have discussed provincial affairs in support of the policy of the Mowat administration.

Three Good Reasons.

Let me at the outset set forth in three general propositions why the Mowat Government should be sustained.

1. *Because it is a Good Government.*

No jobs disgrace its long tenure of office. Its record is clean. It has discharged honestly the trust reposed in it by the people.

2. *Because it is an Economical Government.*

The expenditure of moneys has been careful; the resources of the Province have been husbanded; the revenues safely guarded, and the burdens of the people have been lightened.

3. *It is a Progressive Government.*

Legislation has kept pace with the progress of the people. Reforms have been introduced. Defects have been cured. Evils eradicated. Wrongs redressed. No people in the world are more law-abiding than those in Ontario, none feel the restraint of law so little.

If these three propositions are justified by the facts, then we stand on solid ground. Any Government that fulfills these conditions is worthy of support.

Let us look at some of the main features of Ontario's Government during the last twenty years, and in so doing refer where necessary to the criticisms of Mr. McPherson.

The various interests over which the Government exercises supervision may be classified under the following heads:—Law, Finance, Education, Public Works, Crown Lands and Timber and Agriculture.

Law.

This department presided over by the Premier has met with but little hostile criticism. Under his able judicial management Ontario has advanced along the line of legal reform with rapid strides. From year to year the work of law improvement has gone on; practice has been simplified; litigation cheapened; equitable doctrines have been encouraged, and purely technical legal knowledge has given way to a greater degree of common sense in the administration of our laws. Ever eager to accept timely suggestions for the removal of legal difficulties the present head of the Government has given the people of Ontario twenty years' careful administration of justice, and has sought to reach, and equalize the conditions, of all classes of the community.

The practical unanimity with which the management of his department has been received emphasizes its satisfactory character.

Finance.

The financial administration of the Government has come in for considerable criticism by the Opposition, though no charge of any consequence has ever been preferred, and no better method of managing the finances has been presented.

Controlling under the authority of Parliament the receipts and expenditures of all provincial moneys the Treasury Department occupies

an important place in the Government of the Province. The finances of the Province are in a sound healthy condition, both absolutely and comparatively.

In referring to our financial position, Mr. McPherson starts out with the assertion that "We find the expenditure constantly increasing with the revenue decreasing, the debt piling up, and the Government sacrificing the public domain."

The charge of increasing expenditure is an empty one, unless it can be shewn that we are not getting value for our money.

No one pretends for one moment that the expenditure of the Province in its present condition should remain at the same figure as it was in 1872. With an increasing population; an extended area of territory; a more thorough and efficient administration of Provincial affairs, an increase in expenditure is but the natural outcome of the changing and increasing needs of the people. The great question to be determined is whether the moneys are expended wisely. If it can be shewn that in every department no expenditure is incurred that cannot be defended on public grounds then the charge of over expenditure fails. Has Mr. McPherson shown the increased expenditure to be improper? Can he by any fair means point out wherein he would make any appreciable reduction? If he can he is far in advance of his party, both in and out of the Legislature. The records show that from 1883 to 1892 out of a total expenditure of over $32,200,000 the Opposition objected to only $89,775 or $1 in $360. The expenditure for the different years of the present *regime* may have increased, but only in keeping with the growth of the Province. Nothing is proven whatever by lumping the expenditure from 1873 to 1883, and from 1883 to 1892; and, by comparing them on general principles, draw the unwarranted inference that because the latter decade shews a greater increase than the former, therefore the expenditure is wrong.

If such a comparison be correct in principle, then the Government of Hon. John Sandfield Macdonald must have been a disastrous one. In 1867 the Sandfield Macdonald Government expended on civil government, $18,219.17, but in 1868 increased the expenditure to the enormous figure of $90,959.62, nearly five times as much.

Yet no one seriously charges the Sandfield Macdonald Government with extravagance, because of this fact. The cost of civil government is increasing very slightly in comparison with the growth and development of the Province. So with all other items of expenditure. The increase, if any, is in perfect harmony with the increased needs.

During the last ten years we have added Northwestern Ontario to this Province, enlarging our area by 100,000 square miles. We have also increased in population about 200,000. Should not these facts be taken into consideration when discussing fairly the cost of Governments?

We must also remember that during the last 21 years, numerous new public institutions have been established and maintained—such as the Central Prison, Mimico Asylum, Model Schools, Teachers' Institutes, Agricultural College, Experimental Farm, etc., besides the creation of a National Park system, the Mining Bureau and many otherbranches all, of which have been endorsed by the people of Ontario. It is but necessary to point out a few of these facts to shew the absurdity of Mr. McPherson's whole contention as to increased expenditure.

The Revenue.

Then as to the revenue, the two great sources of revenue are the Dominion grant and the Crown Lands Department. Out of a total revenue of $4,662,921.57 for the year 1892 we received from the Dominion subsidy and specific grant $1,196,872.80, and from the Crown Lands Department $2 252,972.27.

The Dominion grant is unalterable at present. The Crown Lands revenue varies, but has the satisfactory feature of being an increasing revenue.

Mr. McPherson says that "at the present time the financial equilibrium depends in the affairs of this Province upon the frequent and enormous raids into our forest wealth."

In other words, the timber sales held during the last 21 years have been, in Mr. McPherson's eyes, a wrong; in his opinion, the Government should not have utilized the almost unlimited timber wealth of Ontario for the purpose of expending wisely the moneys derived therefrom in the interest of the whole people. Does Mr. McPherson suppose that any government would allow the vast timber stretches of this Province to remain simply because as time rolled on they might become more valuable? Does he not know that if timber were never used it would have no value whatever? Does he not know that timber is needed for human wants as well as other natural products? Does he charge the Government with giving away our timber wealth, or is he not aware that no more advantageous timber sales were ever made than those conducted in this Province during the last 21 years? Every stick of timber sold by the Ontario Government brings its full value.

The Government have made no "raids upon our forest wealth;" they have taken advantage of the opportunity, as they were bound to do, to dispose of timber berths at the best possible figure, and have applied the proceeds of these sales for the use of the whole Province.

The policy of selling our timber has been in vogue since Confederation, during which period we have sold 9,900 square miles of timber limits, 4,234 of which having been disposed of by the Mowat Government. The people have approved this policy, knowing that under the present system, sale by public auction, the highest price will be realized. The last sale, which took place in 1892, was one of the most successful, 633 square miles bringing $2,315,000, or an average of $3,657.18 per square mile.

Compare this showing with the manner in which the Dominion Government has disposed of its timber limits, by parcelling them out to hungry followers at $5 per mile, and the policy of the Ontario Government has its amplest vindication.

Mr. McPherson says our public debt is piling up. This will be news to most of us who have been consoling ourselves with the fact that Ontario has no public debt. At page 176 of the Statistical Year Book for 1893, prepared by the Dominion Government, we have the provincial public debts set forth, but Ontario does not appear in the list. Quebec has a net debt of $15,564,447; Nova Scotia, $1,358,118; New Brunswick, $1,894,092; Manitoba, $697,815; British Columbia, $620,844; Prince Edward Island, $185,000. With reference to Ontario is the following: "The Province of Ontario has sold

annuities to the extent of $1,432,519 to provide for railway expenditure, but these annuities are paid off by a fixed term every year out of consolidated revenue, and, while a liability, do not stand on exactly the same footing as ordinary public debt. The Province, however, has assets very largely in excess of the above sum."

So much for our public debt. Mr. McPherson's financial criticism is of value largely because of the inaccuracies it contains. We are told that the "total railway grant in 1891 was $4,588,168." As the House voted only $3,622,427 for all purposes, Mr. McPherson has evidently been following Mr. Clancy and consequently makes the same egregious mistake in the use of figures.

The statement of the Provincial Treasurer, delivered on the 11th April, 1893, shows the sound financial condition of the Province—from 1867 to 1892, our total receipts were $74,768,294.75, our total expenditure $73,923,101.90—leaving a balance in favor of receipts of $845,195.85.

In addition to this there is still a surplus of assets over liabilities of $5,838,758.12. Such is the financial condition of Ontario.

Education.

The educational system of Ontario is the proud boast of all our citizens. Ample in its provisions for the education of all classes; liberal in the course of instruction provided; furnishing the most complete facilities for advance from the elementary to the higher ranks; knowing no distinction whatever between the different sections of the community; it commands the united support of all our people, and is admired throughout the world. Under the control of a Minister responsible to Parliament and to the people, the Educational Department is annually giving unquestionable evidence of the efficiency of its management and of the improvement in the intellectual condition of our citizens. Year after year we are spending large sums of money in the development of brain, and certainly no money is better invested. The last Annual Report of the Minister of Education shows a steady improvement in educational matters throughout the Province.

Mr. McPherson tells us that "in 1871 we had a Superintendent of Education, and the work of public instruction was never better performed. Now we have a Minister of Education, a Deputy-Minister of Education and clerks of clerks in the endless routine of idleness." This is refreshing from the chairman of the Toronto Board of School Trustees.

The change from a Superintendent to a Minister of Education took place largely through the advice of the late Dr. Ryerson, who for years was the Superintendent of Education in this Province. As far back as 1868, Dr. Ryerson suggested the transfer of the Education Department to a responsible Minister, and again in 1871 wrote to the Government urging the adoption of his views in that direction. In 1876 the change was effected, and after 15 years of practical experience no one conversant with the system as at present conducted would think seriously of returning to the old state of affairs. To-day under the democratic principle we have an Education Department completely under the control of the people. We have raised the standard of

education throughout the Province. We have diminished the number of inferior schools, and are affording more suitable accommodation for our largely-increasing school population.

The reports from this Department indicate the steady advance we are making, and amply justify the Government in the course they have pursued. To say that the educational system is a huge political machine is to ignore the fact that the administration of that part of the system in which politics might be introduced is entirely in the hands of the school sections, and through them, the trustees.

The presence of Mr. McPherson as chairman of the Toronto Board of School Trustees is in itself a contradiction of his own statement.

Then as to the "Clerks of clerks in the endless routine of idleness," it is but necessary to refer to the last Report of the Minister of Education for the information that the "*Clerks of Clerks*" are twelve in number.

Public Works.

In his address Mr. McPherson has little to say with reference to the Department of Public Works. That department, under the able management of the present Commissioner since 1874, has been faithfully administered. No job has ever been perpetrated upon the people; no "figuring up" and "figuring down" has been permitted to allow enormous steals from the treasury through corrupt bargains with contractors.

Immense sums of money have been expended in the construction and maintenance of public works throughout the whole Province, and no single charge has ever been preferred against the Department. The bugaboo of the new Parliament Buildings has almost faded from our minds. No longer shall we hear of this plank of the Conservative platform. The buildings are complete and stand to-day a fitting tribute to the prudence, foresight and economy of the Department and the Government.

Crown Lands and Timber.

The task of supervising the Department of Crown Lands, with all its complexities and details, is not a light one. Against this Department theOpposition have for years concentrated their efforts hoping to discover some evidence in support of their baseless charges.

Mr. McPherson complains that the expenditure in this Department is increasing. He has not troubled himself with pointing out where the increase is not reasonable and right, but simply makes the bald statement that the expenditure has been growing, and consequently must be wrong. It may occur to students of (Ontario) politics that the territory over which the management of the Crown Lands Department extends has been considerably enlarged during the very years that Mr. McPherson complains of. It will also be remembered that it was owing to the persistent offorts of his revered leader and his followers that the question of the disputed territory remained so long unsettled, and that if the policy of the Opposition in this Province had been successful the Ontario of to-day would have been 100,000 square miles less than it is. The vast timber, mineral and other resourses in which the new Ontario abounds, might have have passed to other hands in so far as the party represented by Mr. McPherson is concerned.

We are told that the expenditure in 1883 in the Crown Lands Department "was $67,131; in 1892 it was $131,732, an increase of 96 per cent." Why the year 1883 should be taken is unexplained, unless it be that the expenditure that year reached a comparatively low figure.

If Mr. McPherson had been willing to treat the Department fairly one would have expected from him something more than the mere statement of increase. It was not impossible for him to shew wherein that increase lay, and to satisfy any fair-minded person that the ordinary expenditure in the Crown Lands Department shows but little variation from year to year.

Let us take the two years given—viz., 1883 and 1892:

In 1883 we paid	$67,131	
We carried into 1884 surveys	11,098	
Add cost of Ottawa and Quebec	4,883	
Giving a total of		$83,112
In 1892 we paid	131,863	
Less one-half fire ranging to be repaid	13,951	
Cullers fees	900	
Total		117,012

Excess over $83,112 of $33,900.

From this, however, are to be deducted cost of services in the new territory—finally acquired since 1883—and new services performed in 1892. Services in the new territory—viz., surveys, timber and land agents' expenses and salaries and share of timber sale—amounted to $15,756, reducing the excess to $18,144.

New services, including one-half fire ranging, Cullers' Act refund, timber sale, new land agencies and fishery overseers, amounted to $26,065, thus showing that in 1892 we actually paid less for the same services in 1883 by $7,921. In addition to this we carried over and paid in 1892 for surveys for 1891 $3,700, so that the ordinary services in the Crown Lands Department for 1892 cost $11,621 less than in 1883. One might go on indefinitely, but this instance will suffice.

The attention given of late years to the mining industry, the establishment of Government parks, the opening up of new townships for settlements and for license, besides the natural increase in the ordinary work of the Department, are all matters that would justify an increasing expenditure. The great wonder is that the cost of managing the Department has not increased far beyond the present figure.

Mr. McPherson's Two Principles.

Mr. McPherson says that two principles should be borne in mind in the administration of the Crown Lands Department.

1. "The need of conservation of lands which at present belong to the Province."

As there are yet about 105 millions of acres yet undisposed of out of a total acreage of 126 millions, we can rest assured that the work of conservation has been going on for many years in Ontario.

2. "The re-foresting of portions from which timber has been taken, in order that there may be a continuous crop of timber from which a surplus and an increasing revenue could be received."

This sounds quite reasonable.

There is no doubt that were W. R. Meredith and his progressive followers at the helm, a whole army of *reforesters* would be struggling over the hills and rocks of our northern country, developing in a truly scientific manner the cause of forestry. But of course this would be only for a time. As under the new regime no timber would be sold, the science of reforesting would gradually come to an end, and with its termination the *surplus* and "increasing revenue" would disappear.

The demon of *direct taxation* would confront us with all its terrors,

The Crown Lands Department has been managed well. It is doing much to increase our knowledge of the resources of this great Province. No valid objection has been raised against it.

From all attacks the Government has successfully defended itself, and no investigation has revealed any transaction of which it may be ashamed.

Agriculture.

The Department of Agriculture, as re-organized by the Ontario Government in 1888, gave to the farmers of this Province a distinct recognition of the importance of their vast influence and merits. Occupying, as it does, a first place among the industries of Ontario, it was but natural that at the hands of the Government agriculture should receive the utmost consideration. The success that has attended the establishment of this Department is but the logical outcome of the care and industry bestowed.

Farming is a science. The old ways are giving place to the new and improved methods of cultivation, as in every other department of life. The need of system and knowledge is felt, so in the tilling of the soil and the bringing to their greatest perfection the fruits thereof.

The high position occupied by the farmers of Ontario, whenever they have been placed in competition with those of other countries, is largely due to the assistance rightly given by the Government.

Yet Mr. McPherson says that "we have a Minister of Agriculture who has practically nothing to do and accordingly does little, a Department which could easily have been managed by one of the other Ministers, and should never have been created."

If Mr. McPherson would only take the trouble to look over the reports of the Department of Agriculture, he would find that no idle time is spent by the Minister in the care of his Department. He would see that attention is being directed to every part of the Province, with a view of placing the agricultural interests on a sounder basis. He would find that the rapid progress which characterizes the management of agriculture in Ontario is not obtained by idleness but by work.

Reference is made to the Agricultural College at Guelph, and the charge of increased expense made.

As usual the figures given are misleading and at times incorrect.

From 1883 to 1892 the staff was increased by three and the salaries by $5,000, not very large for ten years' work.

The Experimental Farm has been added since 1883 as well as the entire Dairy Department, including the travelling dairy, experimental work in dairying and special dairy school.

The total cost of the College in 1883 was $58,056 including salaries, less $14,654 revenue, or making in all a net cost to the Province of $43,402. Mr. McPherson has added in an item of $12,000 which

should be charged to capital account, being expenditure incurred in building, etc.

In 1892 the net cost was $60,464, after allowing for a revenue of $19.035, and placing to capital account the sum of $27,000 expended in new buildings.

The slight increase in expenditure during the last ten years is fully accounted for by the immense additions to the work of the College. To-day nearly all the students are from Ontario, and the capacity of the College is fully taxed to meet the attendance.

The Liberal party do not agree with the assertion that the Department of Agriculture should never have been established. Recognition of the rights of agriculture has been a leading plank of the Liberal platform, and the results of their efforts in stimulating the industry are of the most gratifying character.

Provincial Secretary's Department.

Prominent among the matters pertaining to this Department are the Inspection of Division Courts, Insurance, Chartering of Joint Stock Companies, Auditing of Criminal Justice Accounts and until lately the license system, besides the official correspondence of the Province.

The license system of the Province and its administration have come in for a good deal of unfavorable comment from the Opposition, and Mr. McPherson has deemed it his duty to unload the usual stereotyped charges in that regard.

To talk of it being a huge political machine and used for the purpose of making every liquor dealer a mere tool, is simply a farce. Time and again have the Opposition been challenged to substantiate these reckless charges but as often have they failed.

The increase in receipts from licenses during the last nine years is accounted for largely by increased license fees. In 1876 the municipalities were empowered to increase the fees for their own benefit by the maximum amount of $100 in cities, $120 in towns and $140 in incorporated villages and townships. Since the Province took control of the Liquor Licenses in 1876, the municipalities have received $1,224,290 more than has the Province from this source.

Regarding the decrease of licenses during the years from 1883 to 1892 (Mr. McPherson evidently means from 1882 to 1890), and the increase in costs for the same period, Mr. McPherson will readily see that reduction of the number of licenses does not necessarily mean the lessening of the cost of administering the license system.

The increase in 1890 over 1882 was not due to enormous advance in salaries. This increase includes miscellaneous expenditure for office rent, printing, magistrates, constables, witnesses, detective and counsel fees, etc., which, in 1890, amounted to $9,773 more than in 1882.

The total amount paid for Inspectors' salaries and Commissioners' expenses in 1890-91 exceeded that paid in 1882-83 by only $10,140. During the interval, six new license districts were erected. Three assistant License Inspectors had to be appointed in Toronto, Hamilton and Ottawa. The expenses incident to these were $6,450, which sum, deducted from $10,140, leaves an increase in nine years of only $5,690 for 88 license districts, or an average of about $5 a year for each district.

The policy of the Government in the regulation of the liquor traffic has met with the approval of the temperance people throughout the Province and by the electors has been endorsed in an emphatic manner. The transfer of the license system from the municipalities to the Government has given a better license law, a better class of hotels, and has reduced to a gratifying extent the evils of intemperance. The number

of licenses is being reduced, and outside of a total prohibitory law it would be difficult to find a system that has met with more unanimous approval from the friends of temperance than has the Liquor License system of Ontario. So much then for a short summary of the different departments of the Government.

Mr. Noxon's Appointment.

In general terms Mr. McPherson charges the Government with using the public resources for the benefit of political friends, and instances the appointment of Mr. Noxon as one case where an *unnecessary* appointment was made. Mr. McPherson should know that in the office Mr. Noxon fills as Inspector of the Central Prison he has abundance of work to perform. The Central Prison is no longer a mere depository for criminals, but in recent years has been enlarged and widened until it is one of the great institutions of the Province. Lately the binder-twine manufactory has been added and this, together with the other branches of industry in vogue there, necessitated the appointment of an additional competent man. No man in Ontario has a better reputation than Mr. Noxon had for the possession of the essential qualifications for such an office—a practical business man, thoroughly acquainted with the work of supervision, endowed with natural faculties and having had a large experience. The Government was fortunate in securing such a man for the position—the saving of the merest trifles in the purchases will more than repay the Province for the salary outlay. When mercantile institutions throughout the land pay their managers the most princely salaries, the people of Ontario will not grumble at the cost of having such an efficient manager as Mr. Noxon. So through the list.

The Plebiscite.

The position of the Government regarding the plebiscite is also attacked. It is clear, however, that the Government in making provision for a plebiscite on the temperance question were acting in consonance with the expressions of opinion from representative organizations throughout the Province. From temperance societies were presented 495 petitions; from churches, 314; from municipal corporations, 156; in all, 965 in favor of a plebiscite—while on the other hand, 255 petitions were presented from temperance societies, 54 from churches and 5 from municipal corporations, in all 314 in favor of prohibition. The question of the sincerity of the Government in this matter is easily answered by the above.

The closing words of Mr. McPherson's address are truly significant. He intimates that no longer will his party fight on the line of bigotry and prejudice. Before his mind there no doubt arose the "*Facts for Irish Electors*" in the election of 1883, when all that was worthy of Irish consideration was alleged to be found in the Conservative ranks alone; or it may be that the Ross Bible of 1886 appeared in judgment before him as a reminder of the failure of his party to make religious cries a stepping stone to power; or, later on, he must have heard the distant sound of "unite against the common enemy" as borne over the hills and dales in 1890 it led his party to disaster. 'Tis well he disclaims against bigotry and prejudice, for in the politics of this Province there is no room for such. And it is because the Government of Sir Oliver Mowat has kept clear from the breakers of race and creed, because that Government has moved on higher grounds in the administration of affairs, and because the Opposition has failed to grasp the true principles of government, do we believe that 1894 will see no change so far as the Government benches are concerned. (Loud applause.)